

Michigan Catholic Conference



Ladies and Gentlemen:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. I am Tim Metts, Director of Restorative Justice for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Lansing. In a previous life, I spent twenty-nine years as a police officer in the Cities of Lansing and Leslie. Over those years in law enforcement, I have seen many vicious crimes and witnessed many victims suffer because of another's cruelty.

Today, I am here to urge you to consider passage of these bills. It is sad that there are so many kids that become involved in crime. I wish that I had the answer that would reverse this trend. I believe that, because they lack the judgment of an adult, some kids will commit crimes that they would not were they more mature.

Recently, I spoke with a thirty-four year old man who is incarcerated at the Lakeland Correctional Facility in Coldwater. At the age of sixteen, he brutally and viciously murdered a man and his wife in cold blood. Sentenced to life without parole, he spent the first six years bitter and angry, convinced that the world was against him and not caring. Then he met an elderly prisoner who, he says, reminded him of himself. He wondered if this was the way he would be and resolved to change his attitude and life.

He began searching his soul and tried many different avenues, such as the Aryan Brotherhood (whose tenets he discovered to be false through study), finally arriving at Christianity. He has educated himself and today is writing books to assist others in not following his path. His writing really is quite incredible. He is determined, he says, to live his life responsibly.

I asked him what this legislation would mean for him. He responded by telling me that, if he were never to receive a parole, he would accept that because today it is his responsibility to serve the sentence that he was given for his crime. I also asked him if he ever thought about contacting the victim's family to express his regret. He said that his regret will never replace what he took from their family and would only serve to assuage his own guilt. Were he to contact them, it may cause them more grief and he does not want that to happen. Only if they contacted him, when and if they were ready to talk to him, would he express his remorse to them.

I urge you to consider this package for passage. I certainly do not intend to minimize the seriousness of the crimes committed, some extremely grievous. However, I am not the same person that I was at sixteen. None of us are. Give the Parole Board the opportunity to weigh the facts of the crime, the length of the sentence served and the individual presented before them in order to make a just decision as it relates to a persons parole.

Thank you.